

Minutes
Pro Parks Levy Oversight Committee
February 27, 2006

Committee Members Present: Neal Adams, Alan Alabastro, Maisha Barnett, Lisa Chen, Doug Dunham, Don Harper, Terry Holme, Jeff Hou, Phillippe Jeoffroy, Sharon Lee, Peter Lukevich, Joyce Moty, Alec Stephens

Staff: B.J. Brooks, Susan Golub, Donald Harris, Catherine Anstett

Committee Business: The meeting agenda was approved, as were the minutes from the January 23, 2006 meeting.

Public Comments: There were none.

Member Celebration: The meeting began with a celebration to honor retiring members: Peter Lukevich, Maisha Barnett and Adrian Moroles. The members were thanked for their contributions to the oversight of the Pro Parks Levy and their dedication to improving the lives of Seattle citizens through great parks.

Peter Lukevich spoke about the benefits he personally gained through his work with the Committee. He noted that he wants his public involvement to include personal growth. When he started with the Oversight Committee he was predominantly a ballfield representative, but has learned while on the Committee that it is not one or the other, not an open space v. ballfield issue. A good park system is a combination of all types of park use. He hopes that Committee members have learned about this synergy – ballfields, and open space are needed and are sorely underserved.

Mr. Lukevich also remarked that the Parks and Recreation Department is very responsive and provides public access – the accusations in the paper recently in this regard have been totally unfounded. The Department does significant outreach – as is evidenced by the work of the Oversight Committee. The Committee experienced the wonder of citizens coming to speak to other citizens passionately about their parks, evidence of the pride and love people have for their parks. Mr. Lukevich stated the Dept. is extremely well run and thanked staff and the Committee members for their good work. He will continue his involvement with Parks through coaching youth sports and plans on getting a teaching certificate and teach and coach in high school.

Maisha Barnett thanked the Committee for their good work and echoed Mr. Lukevich's sentiments about the value of the work the Committee does. Her work at Powell Barnett Park, named after her grandfather, started her involvement with Parks and she has grown personally through her work on behalf of Powell Barnett and for the Oversight Committee. Ms. Barnett noted that Powell Barnett recently received an anonymous private donation of \$450,000! Ms. Barnett spoke about the hard work of staff and complimented their diligence in moving projects forward.

Ms. Golub forwarded comments from Adrian Moroles, who could not attend the meeting due to another commitment. He wanted to thank the Committee for their hard work and will continue involvement with Parks.

Deputy Superintendent Brooks thanked Ms. Barnett, Mr. Lukevich and Mr. Moroles for their work and dedication and for their kind works tonight.

Acquisition Projects – Quarterly Report

Donald Harris presented the quarterly report on the Acquisition Projects. He prefaced his remarks with comments about the value of working with the Oversight Committee and acknowledged the benefits the Committee brings with their review of the work of staff.

Mr. Harris described the various funding sources that are used to supplement Levy funds, noting that Levy funds are used as a match to secure Conservations Futures Tax (CFT) funding from King County. Our annual CFT award has averaged about \$3 million, and we have needed our own \$3 million to secure the County funds. Mr. Harris described the difference between acquisition and development project budgets. With Levy development projects, the budget amounts are specified in the Levy Ordinance and the amounts are fixed. With acquisition, no individual budgets are specified in the Levy – there is just an aggregate amount for each category of projects.

Mr. Harris reported that in the **Green Spaces** subcategory the purchase of 3 properties in the East Duwamish Greenbelt closed late last year. The properties help fill in open space gaps with the goal of possibly providing trails through the Greenbelt in the future, and improving management through contiguous ownership. Properties still being sought are:

- **Arroyos Natural Area:** In Southwest Seattle, specifically the Westwood Reserve where existing covenants don't adequately protect the property from development;
- **Admiral Substation:** A transfer from City Light in the Duwamish Head Greenbelt, but which Parks is required to buy;
- **Kubota Natural Area:** Appraisals are underway and Parks is working with the Kubota Gardens Foundation (on a property identified in the Opportunity Fund submittals) with the intent that a cooperative arrangement can be developed for the Foundation's use of the structure; and
- **St. Marks Greenbelt:** There is a signed deal for 1 site adjacent to Colonnade Park.

In the **Neighborhood Park** subcategory there were some great early successes with 12 projects completed. Some difficult projects remain:

- **Capitol Hill Park:** Originally focused on Group Health parking lots which were initially on Group Health's surplus property list, but have since become unavailable. At a public meeting in the community last week Parks staff proposed consolidating the funding for the east Capitol Hill project with funding for the

west side project. However, the community requested Parks continue exploring locations on the east side of the hill.

- **Bellevue Substation:** It was determined a couple of years ago as not a good site for a park. After a community process and with approval of the Committee, the community agreed that a parking lot near Olive Way, would be a better park site. Originally the property had a willing seller, but who now seems not so willing. Parks will continue pursuing the parking lot site. It was also noted that City Light has apparently determined that the sub station will not be surplus.
- **First Hill:** Exploring property with the Archdiocese and alternatives if this site falls through.
- **Ballard Park:** Originally identified the Monroe Substation, but Parks and the community have concluded that this is not a good site. Condemnation is underway to add property to the Ballard Opportunity Fund park.
- **Morgan Substation:** A named project in the Levy, but like the Monroe Substation, it is not a good site for a park, and City Light may not surplus the site. Parks is looking at alternatives, including a monorail station site and 2 different locations on California Avenue in the Morgan Junction neighborhood. When an alternative is found, the Committee will be asked to vote formally on the change of location.

Sylvan Way Acquisition Project: Mr. Harris described the Sylvan Way project in detail. Sylvan Way is a named project in the Levy, but after several changes of ownership, all unwilling sellers, the property is being developed, leaving no opportunity for a park. Because there is significant open space in the general area of this project, staff is proposing that the Sylvan Way project be abandoned. If the Committee approves abandoning the project, the next step is to get City Council approval.

Catherine Anstett described and showed on a map the existing open space in the Sylvan Way area.

Responding to questions from Committee members, Mr. Harris stated that the funds that would have been spent on Sylvan Way, had there been a willing seller, will remain in the Neighborhood Park acquisition category. The money will be spent within the category, but not necessarily in the same geographic area. Only after all of the named Neighborhood Parks projects are completed would the money be reallocated to a different Levy funding category. However, a goal is to use the funding to assist with the purchase of the alternative property for the Morgan Substation. Abandonment at this time will allow Parks to plan for spending the funding set aside for Sylvan Way.

Sylvan Way had received a \$300,000 allocation from the Conservation Futures Tax Fund. Parks will apply to the citizen's committee which oversees the CFT and request that the Sylvan CFT funding be reallocated.

Peter Lukevich proposed a motion to abandon the Pro Parks Levy Sylvan Way acquisition project, with the strong recommendation that the City Council allocate the Sylvan Way funding to other needy Neighborhood Parks category acquisition projects.

Sharon Lee seconded the motion. The motion was modified by friendly amendment to say that the approval is contingent on support from the Delridge District Council. The amended motion was approved unanimously.

Opportunity Fund Acquisition Projects: Mr. Harris continued his report on acquisitions with a discussion of the projects funded by the Opportunity Fund.

Denny Triangle: Staff has been shut out of every property purchase sought in the Denny Triangle, partly because we have to purchase at appraised value and land is selling at the considerably higher speculative value. City Light is considering building a new substation in this neighborhood to support the growth and Parks is considering a possible combination substation/park. No specific site has yet been identified.

Pioneer Square/ International District: Staff initially focused on property in the International District near the Post Office and the International Children's Park. Offers were made and rejected. Staff is currently looking at property in Little Saigon that is proposed to be changed from industrial to residential zoning and therefore would be a more appropriate park neighborhood.

In response to a question from a Committee member, Mr. Harris stated that staff investigated the soon to be surplussed INS Building, but concluded that there was not an opportunity for a park at that site.

University District: Staff has been evaluating alternatives including the University Heights School south parking lot and an addition to Christie Park located at 43rd NE and NE 9th. Initial efforts to partner with a developer have not resulted in a project. Discussions with the community will continue before an acquisition decision is made.

12th Avenue Urban Village: There is a City site under a development option that does not appear to be progressing, so staff has begun to investigate this site for a park project.

In the discussion that followed Mr. Harris' briefing, Mr. Holmes requested a briefing regarding the end-game/process for the conclusion of the Levy, to include information about what happens if all the money is not spent and what if there is money left over. In this regard, Mr. Dunham requested a regular quarterly agenda item relating to the end of the Levy. Mr. Stephens noted that the timing of spending is an issue and cautioned against a spending frenzy at the end of the Levy. Mr. Lukevich noted that the Levy ordinance provides for continuation of the Oversight Committee beyond the expiration of the Levy if all of the money has not been spent.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00p.m.

